

Ruth Rothaus Caston. *The Elegiac Passion: Jealousy in Roman Love Elegy*. Emotions of the Past. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. x, 176. \$74.00. ISBN 978-0-19-992590-2.

This book begins from the observation that elegy regularly depicts love triangles involving poet, mistress and a rival – a situation ripe for jealousy, which Caston sees as a “central theme” (p5) of the genre. Since the Latin vocabulary of jealousy is inadequate, and in any case avoided by poets, an analysis must necessarily go beyond terminology. Caston takes a cognitive approach, seeing emotions primarily as beliefs, that might also have associated physiological responses. In the introduction, she sketches the outlines of various ancient philosophical positions on emotions, and argues that elegists demonstrably wrote with some awareness of these views. She outlines a universal scenario for (*sc.* sexual) jealousy, involving a bond to another, a danger of losing that bond, and a desire to deprive or punish the rival; all these can be elaborated, though differently in specific cultures, periods or genres. While jealousy has no typical Latin signifier, components such as anger or fear, or words such as *livor* or *laedere*, may be explicitly present, along with perceptions of infidelity and symptoms of suffering. What elegy uniquely provides is first-person depictions of the process.

Chapter 1 compares Cicero’s (*Tusc. Disp.*) and Lucretius’ views on love with those of Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid. Caston notes similarities, particularly regarding “the plight of the lover, the description of love as an illness, and the emphasis on finding a cure” (p22). The two genres diverge, since philosophers look to philosophical argumentation for a cure, while elegists prefer other remedies, including ultimately setting their feelings to verse. Chapter 2 examines examples of male and female jealousy in elegy, considering why and how jealousy is provoked, what it feels like to the sufferer, how it is expressed (to reader and/or lover), how others react, and how jealous feelings might be resolved. Chapter 3 explores further the sensory – especially visual and auditory – triggers of jealousy and their interpretation, arguing that women are initially sceptical of evidence and only eventually persuaded of infidelity, while men rush quickly to judgment. Chapter 4’s focus is on both genders’ reactions to jealous feelings: in “traditional misogynistic” (p94) fashion, elegy portrays jealous women as uncontrolledly aggressive, but men – or at least poets – as generally attempting self-control, even if not always successfully. The final two chapters turn from the jealousy scenario to considering jealousy’s wider place in Propertius’ poetry. Chapter 5 examines the reader’s role, both ‘internal’ rival poets named in the text, whom the poet comes to sympathise with and even be drawn to, and ‘external’ readers to whom the first-person portrayal common in elegy might suggest parallels in their own love affairs, and so cause them too to feel jealousy. In the final chapter, Caston reads several poems as advising external readers how they should manage their jealousy, through recommending a sceptical approach to jealousy triggers and stressing “the importance of *fides*” (p143). She argues that Propertius extends this advice to non-erotic types of relationship too, including in “marriage, politics, religion, even the relationship between narrator and audience” (p158).

Caston’s book has two major strengths, containing both a detailed examination of a Roman emotion (or emotion scenario), and a well-argued case for necessarily reading love elegy with this emotion in mind. This reviewer would have preferred to see a deeper engagement with modern multi-disciplinary research on jealousy (e.g. Hart and Legerstee (eds) 2010; Wurmser and Jarass (eds) 2008; Salovey (ed.) 1991). For example, while

jealousy is regularly seen as a complex involving e.g. anger, fear or envy, love is rarely included (the inverse of Caston's premiss on p21). Some hold that jealousy stems primarily not from love, but the desire not to lose something that is 'mine' – linking sexual to non-sexual jealousy. Second, while the emotion Caston depicts is clearly related to our (sexual) jealousy, it would be interesting to learn to what extent jealousy in elegy – beyond the first-person perspective – is merely a generic conceit, or how far it reflects Roman jealousy as expressed in other genres or non-literary evidence. These aspects aside, Caston has added significantly to our so far rather limited knowledge of Roman emotions, and future investigations of Roman love elegy should similarly take her views into account.

Royal Holloway, University of London

ED SANDERS